




Please substitute the paragraph beginning at page 6, line 23 and ending at page 6a, line 8 with the amended paragraph as follows:

 According to this aspect, the present invention provides a building system including a building panel and a reinforcing element, the building panel having spaced metal sheets interconnected by a core, said metal sheets defining opposite major surfaces of said panel, each of said metal sheets including opposite edge regions which form longitudinal edge regions of the panel, wherein at least one of the edge regions of the metal sheets on both opposite sides of the panel is profiled to form connecting elements, the connecting elements of the longitudinal edge regions of the panel being adapted to interfit with the connecting element of a respective one of the longitudinal edge regions of a like panel, the panel being configured such that the major surfaces of the interconnected panels are aligned and in substantially abutting relationship to form a substantially continuous surface and wherein the reinforcing element is operative to be installed at the joint formed on connection of the panel with a like panel and is secured in place by locating between the interfitting connecting elements to form a concealed reinforcing element which is operative to improve the load bearing characteristics of the interconnected panels.

Please substitute the paragraph beginning at page 7, line 6 and ending at page 7, line 9 with the amended paragraph as follows:

 The advantage of this aspect of the invention is that it provides a building panel with enhanced load bearing properties as compared to simple sandwich panels. Further, fully concealing the reinforcing element enables continuous smooth surfaces on both sides of the panels to be obtained.

Please substitute the section beginning at page 7, line 12 and ending at page 7, line 21 with the amended section as follows:

 In a particularly preferred form, the sheet structure includes longitudinal edge regions which are profiled to enable the panels to be connected in abutting relationship with a like panel in edge to edge relationship and the reinforcing element is locatable within the joint formed at the abutting panels.

D⁵ In a particularly preferred form, the panel is arranged to interlock with a like panel at the longitudinal edge regions. Preferably the longitudinal edge regions interlock with the reinforcing element. This arrangement has the advantage that it further increases the load bearing capability of the panel as the reinforcing element and the profiled longitudinal edge regions can work together.

Please substitute the paragraph beginning at page 8, line 9 and ending at page 8, line 11 with the amended paragraph as follows:

D⁶ Figure 6 is a perspective view illustrating the connection of a variation of the panel of Figure 3 with a like panel and including an intermediate reinforcing element;

Please substitute the paragraph beginning at page 8, line 18 and ending at page 8, line 20 with the amended paragraph as follows:

D⁷ Figure 10 is a perspective view illustrating the connection of a variation of the panel of Figure 3 with a like panel and including an intermediate reinforcing element;

Please substitute the paragraph beginning at page 13, line 12 and ending at page 13, line 26 with the amended paragraph as follows:

D⁸ The coupling arrangement to join adjacent panels using the interfitting projections and recesses 32 and 33 provide an area of load bearing strength at the engaged edge regions. This has significant advantage as it improves the load bearing characteristics of the wall formed by the adjacent panels. In most applications, the interconnection of the panels gives the wall sufficient load bearing characteristics. If, however, additional load bearing strength is required in the constructed wall using the panels 20, a metal reinforcing element 40 may be incorporated at the connection. One such example is illustrated in Figure 6 where the beam is formed from roll formed metal sheet 41 and incorporates oppositely disposed channels 42 and 43 which are arranged to interfit between the engaging projections and recesses (32 and 34) of the adjacent panels 20ⁱ and 20ⁱⁱ. The reinforcing element 40 substantially improves the load bearing characteristics of the wall as, by virtue of its configuration and its engagement with the adjacent panels, it is able to accommodate substantial compressive loading.

Please substitute the paragraph beginning at page 14, line 10 and ending at page 14, line 16 with the amended paragraph as follows:

D⁹ Figure 10 illustrates a further variation of the panel 20. This panel includes many similar features to the earlier embodiments and accordingly like reference numerals have been given to like features. In a similar arrangement to the previous embodiments, the panel 20 includes longitudinal edge regions 24, 25 which are profiled to enable the panel 20 to interlock with a like panel. A reinforcing element 40 is also arranged to interfit at the joint between adjacent panels.

Please substitute the paragraph beginning at page 15, line 13 and ending at page 15, line 20 with the amended paragraph as follows:

D¹⁰ The positive or snap fit between the male and female couplings occurs whether or not the reinforcing element 40 is incorporated. The profile of the reinforcing element 40 has inner surfaces 65 which matches that of the female couplings 33 and an outer surface 66 which matches that of the male coupling 32. As a result, the reinforcing element 40 is able to snap fit into connection with the female couplings 33ⁱ of a first panel 20ⁱ. Once in place, the male couplings 32ⁱⁱ of the like panel 20ⁱⁱ is then able to locate into engagement with the inner surface 65 of the connected reinforcing element 40.

Please substitute the section beginning at page 15, line 30 and ending at page 16, line 17 with the amended section as follows:

D¹¹ The composite panel 20 incorporating the profiled edges and the internal reinforcing element 40 may be advantageously used in many aspects of building constructions including in interior as well as exterior wall structures, or in flooring or ceiling systems. Further, the choice of the surface materials used to form the outer faces 38, 39 of the panel will depend on the application of the panel. For example, if the panel is to be used as an internal partition wall, then the paper covering may be laminated to the metal substrate as described earlier so that the panel has a surface characteristic which is similar to that of plasterboard. Alternatively, the outer face of the panel may be exposed metal, such as stainless steel, which is suitable for use in operating theatres or the like. In this example, to reduce material cost, the stainless steel may be applied as a laminate to the metal substrate of